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President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 40

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/68/116)

Draft resolution (A/68/L.6)

Mr. Maksimychev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's discussion of Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/68/116), which presents the views of Member States condemning the unilateral and extraterritorial economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba.

Russia's principled position is well known and remains unchanged. Our country, along with an overwhelming majority of the international community, supports the immediate lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba by the United States. The ideologically motivated and decades-long anti-Cuba embargo is a historical anachronism, an echo of the long-dead era of the Cold War. This unfriendly act, carried out in violation of numerous General Assembly resolutions, inflicts serious damage on Cuba's national economy, infringes on its citizens' legal rights, worsens their living conditions and has a negative impact on the interests of third-party countries.

We believe such damaging unilateral political coercion to be incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations and conducive to an atmosphere of increased confrontation in international relations. In that regard, on 22 October, the State Duma of the Russian Federation appealed unanimously to the General Assembly, the national parliaments of States Members of the United Nations and international parliamentary organizations to help end the sanctions against Cuba. Expressing their solidarity with the people of Cuba, Russia's lawmakers emphasized Cuba's right to determine its own path to political and economic development.

Guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, based on the inadmissibility of any discriminatory action or interference in States' internal affairs, the Russian delegation supports the draft resolution of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session (A/68/L.6) with its demand for abolition of the blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

Mr. Thomson (Fiji): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 40, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

I would first like to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

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The Group of 77 and China expresses its deep concern about the continued economic, commercial and financial embargo unilaterally imposed for more than half a century by the United States of America against Cuba. The Group of 77 and China reiterates that the embargo against Cuba contravenes the fundamental norms of international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States. Its continued application violates the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in one another's domestic affairs.

The embargo continues to impose severe economic and financial restrictions on Cuba. It has caused and continues to cause a high degree of economic and financial damage. It has a negative impact on the welfare and well-being of the people of Cuba and constitutes a very significant hindrance to Cuba's economic and social development.

The deepening impact of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis and the continued embargo imposed by the Government of the United States — which includes sanctions and the application of extraterritorial national laws against third-party countries' citizens, institutions and companies that establish economic, commercial and financial relations with Cuba — will contribute to further aggravating the Cuban people's hardships. Furthermore, the embargo frustrates efforts to achieve all the internationally agreed development goals, including the all-important Millennium Development Goals, and negatively affects regional cooperation in the area.

The Group of 77 and China has always been firmly against the embargo. That position has been reiterated at its major summits, where the Group firmly has rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, and has called on the United States Government to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate once again its long-standing and principled position on this important matter, and to recall the ministerial declaration of the thirty-seventh annual Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group, held in New York in September. The Ministers firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries, and reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately.

The Group of 77 and China is committed to working for the achievement of peaceful coexistence among nations. Such a goal requires that all nations adhere to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful conduct of relations among nations and the rule of law, including international law.

We recall that last year 188 Member States voted in favour of the resolution introduced by the representative of Cuba (resolution 67/4). That number represented an overwhelming majority of the international community, demanding an end to the five-decades-old embargo and full adherence to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of a State Member of the United Nations.

The Group of 77 and China will again fully support the draft resolution against the embargo (A/68/L.6) and urges all Member States to do likewise.

Mr. Montaño (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): For more than 20 years, Mexico has come to this forum to express its strong rejection of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba and to set out its opposition to the use of coercive measures that are not supported in law.

We recognize the progress Cuba has made towards meeting the targets established for the Millennium Development Goals despite the negative impact of the embargo, which over half a century has been the main obstacle to the country's further development and therefore to improving the life of the people.

The Government of Mexico reiterates its firm rejection of the application of unilateral measures or laws such as this economic embargo against any State. We must underscore that what is occurring in Cuba flouts and goes against the stance of our countries. No kind of political, economic or military sanctions can be imposed on a State except on the basis of decisions or recommendations by the Security Council or the General Assembly.

Mexico and Cuba enjoy historic ties in a climate of renewed confidence, invariably observing the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in particular peaceful coexistence.

During his recent visit to Cuba, the Foreign Minister of Mexico recognized the reform process in Cuba and the opportunities it presented for increasing investment, bilateral trade and cooperation programmes and for continuing our high-level political dialogue.

The Government of Mexico has reiterated its firm opposition to the economic, political and diplomatic isolation of Cuba. We therefore have decisively supported Cuba's incorporation into regional integration mechanisms with a view to promoting economic and trade exchanges, cooperation and development.

In keeping with what I have said, and in a gesture of great significance for relations between our two countries, Mexico will vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.6 before us today. We believe that this is the least we can do to bring to an end a deplorable state of affairs that has persisted for more than 40 years.

Mr. Gálvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on the occasion of the introduction of draft resolution A/68/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Since the adoption of resolution 47/19 on 24 November 1992, the General Assembly has successively adopted, each year, a resolution emphasizing the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. It should be recalled that at its sixty-seventh session, the Assembly adopted resolution 67/4 with the same title, with the overwhelming support of the States Members of the United Nations. Since 1992, 21 resolutions of the most representative and democratic organ of the United Nations, namely, the General Assembly, have time and again requested an end to the embargo imposed on Cuba.

Today, we are meeting to consider this resolution once again. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States wishes to affirm its support for what will be the Assembly's twenty-second resolution on this matter. It is important to reiterate the underlying motivations for the position of CELAC on this subject. In our view, the commercial, economic and financial embargo imposed on Cuba is contrary to the letter, spirit, and principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The Charter of the United Nations enshrines rights, obligations and principles that have become part of the legal corpus not only of international law but of humankind. It must not be violated or harmed by any Member. Member States must align their national and international behaviour with the rights, obligations and principles enshrined in our founding Charter. CELAC reiterates those principles, including the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in internal affairs, freedom of trade and navigation, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba began in 1959 and continues to this day. Today, the embargo has become a rigid system of unilateral measures that has been extended over time, creating severe economic losses for the Cuban people, which are felt in the most sensitive areas of their life. We express our deep concern on the strengthening of the extraterritorial dimensions of the embargo, as well as on the increasing persecution of Cuba's international financial transactions, which is contrary to the political will of the international community, as reflected in the resolution.

CELAC reiterates the concern, already expressed in resolution 67/4, regarding the application by States Members of the United Nations of laws and regulations such as the so-called Helms-Burton Act, the extraterritorial effects of which affect the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction, and the freedom of trade and navigation. The unilateral measures applied under the embargo imposed on Cuba are affecting many companies that conduct business with Cuba in accordance with international law, including the norms established by the World Trade Organization. Over the past year, numerous restrictions and fines have been imposed on international companies, some of them belonging to members of our Community.

We would like to recall that at the CELAC Summit held in Santiago de Chile on 28 January, the member States of our Community issued a special communiqué on the need to put an end to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba, in which they reiterated their strongest condemnation of the application of laws and measures contrary to international law, such as the Helms-Burton Act, including its extraterritorial effect, and called on the Government of the United States to put an end to the application of that Act.

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States strongly supports the adoption of draft resolution A/68/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We emphasize the incompatibility of the application of unilateral measures, which have no backing in international law, with the letter, spirit, and principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We call urgently on the United States of America to align its relevant national legislation with the Charter, the resolutions of the General Assembly, the views of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean and of all the regions of the world, as well as with the voice of its own people.

CELAC is counting on the support traditionally given to the resolution submitted today for the consideration of this body, which refers to the adverse effects being inflicted on one of our members.

Finally, we call for the respect, with no excuses, for the sovereignty and self-determination of the Cuban nation.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

Allow me to begin by recognizing the presence at this meeing of His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. Through him we offer our greetings to and solidarity with the people and Government of Cuba.

Today, we are considering for the twenty-second time a draft resolution on the embargo imposed by the United States Government against Cuba (A/68/L.6). Last year, in an historic move, 188 Member States in the Assembly voted in favour of a similar resolution (resolution 67/4), thereby expressing their support to the people of Cuba and overwhelmingly denouncing the illegal embargo against that country. The overwhelming majority of Member States that supported the resolution clearly showed how the international community stands on this important issue.

The Non-Aligned Movement has always reiterated its strongest opposition to unilateral coercive measures with extraterritoriality effects.

At the most recent Summit of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Tehran in August 2012, the Heads of State or Government reiterated their call on the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which is unilateral and contrary to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, it causes huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba. The NAM Summit further expressed deep concern over the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo and rejected the reinforcement of the measure adopted by the Government of the United States aimed at tightening the embargo, as well as all other recent measures carried out by that Government against the people of Cuba. They reiterated that those measures constitute a violation of Cuba's sovereignty and a massive violation of the human rights of its people. The NAM Summit also urged strict compliance with the General Assembly resolutionson this issue.

The coercive measures in place are more than just a bilateral embargo against Cuba, as the Government of the United States claims. They in fact consist of an extraterritorial embargo that affects Cuba's dealings with third countries, which violates State sovereignty and the right to free trade. In so doing, it further flouts international law and the Charter of the United Nations. The embargo, which has been in place for more than 50 years, is also a despicable practice, as it undermines the human rights of the Cuban people. For over 50 years, the embargo has sought a change of Government in Cuba through pressuring and punishing the Cuban people. It has so far failed to achieve that goal, and it will not ever be able to achieve it.

The attempt on the part of the United States Government is characteristic of an era in which lawless actions and behaviours prevailed in relations among States. Despite the huge pressure, the people of Cuba have endured hardship resulting from the embargo over so many decades. They are indeed worthy of praise for the significant progress they have made, specifically in sensitive areas like education, health care and international cooperation, among others. Undoubtedly, the embargo has denied Cuba access to markets, to development aid from international financial institutions, and to technology transfer, which are of great importance for the development of the Cuban economy and for the well-being and advancement of its people.

In closing, my delegation reiterates, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, its call on the Government of the United States of America to comply with the provisions of the 21 resolutions already adopted by the

General Assembly on this issue and to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba.

Mr. Bame (Ethiopia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 40, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The African Group associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For over two decades, the General Assembly has adopted, by an overwhelming majority, resolutions submitted by Cuba on this agenda item. However, over those years, the resolutions have not been implemented at all. The economic, commercial and financial blockade has not been lifted, and it continues to cause unnecessary hardship on Cuba and its people.

In today's world, dialogue and negotiation remain the appropriate way to settle disputes and to ensure peaceful coexistence among States. Africa hopes that the United States, in accordance with the purposes and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, will put an end to its embargo against Cuba. The African Group also hopes that relations between the two countries will significantly improve. Apart from the benefits in the bilateral area, that will contribute to the promotion of stability and development in the entire region.

In that regard, we would like to reiterate the decision of the 21st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on the matter at its meeting held in Addis Ababa on 26 May 2013. Our Heads of State and Government reiterated their call on and once again invited the Government of the United States of America to lift the economic and trade embargo imposed on Cuba. It is our hope that the United States, in line with the resolutions of the General Assembly, will consider its position with the view to creating a situation for a new chapter in United States-Cuba relations, for which the lifting of the embargo would no doubt lay a very solid foundation.

Africa affirms its full support for draft resolution A/68/L.6 before us on the necessity of ending the embargo against Cuba. We do so, first of all, because it is right. We do so also because Cuba has a proud history in Africa because of its role in Africa's struggle for liberation. The people of Africa will continue to remember that role, and the people of Cuba should continue to be proud of that historic contribution.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on agenda item 40, : "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the embargo (A/68/116), which has been in place for half a century despite its repeated rejection by Member States, the United Nations system and regional and non-governmental organizations.

As it has done in the past, the OIC expresses its deep concern at the lingering embargo against Cuba, which contravenes the basic principles governing peaceful relations among States and also violates the principles of non-intervention and non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, as well as the sovereign equality of States.

Since 1992, every year, the General Assembly has adopted a resolution highlighting the unacceptable humanitarian cost and effects on the Cuban population of the embargo's many direct and indirect punitive measures, which in all probability have been counterproductive in terms of their impact on Cuba's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Those unilateral measures have helped to infringe upon and impede the development aspirations of the people of Cuba and have continuously frustrated the efforts of Cubans to enjoy decent living conditions. The OIC stresses that the unilateral measures of the embargo imposed on Cuba have severely affected many companies and entities that conduct normal business with Cuba in accordance with international law and within the regulatory framework of the World Trade Organization, thereby causing severe economic and commercial hardship in the nation.

The OIC is fully committed to contributing towards the achievement of peaceful coexistence among nations and adhering to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In the same vain, all nations, regardless of their power, size or natural endowment, are called upon to fully adhere to the principles of mutual respect, the peaceful conduct of relations among nations and the rule of law.

The normalization of relations between the United States of America and Cuba is long overdue; the prevailing situation is unsustainable. We all agree that

it is high time that pragmatism and a sense of purpose overtake the long-running inertia, innuendos, acrimony and distrust. Because of its uniqueness in this otherwise harmonious and flourishing hemisphere, the blockade serves no purpose; it is an anomaly and, indeed, an anachronism that can no longer be justified on political or moral grounds, or in the context of international cooperation.

Finally, the OIC joins the overwhelming majority of Member States in acknowledging the negative impact that the blockade has had, and continues to have, on the welfare and well-being of the people of Cuba, and in calling upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Member States of the OIC will again this year fully support the draft resolution against the embargo (A/68/L.6), and urge all other States to do so.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to propose that the list of speakers be closed in view of the large number of delegations on the list.

It was so decided.

Mr. Moncada (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the member States of Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), including the associated States of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

I should also like to pay tribute to the presence of Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

MERCOSUR was founded on the principles of solidarity, interdependence and peaceful coexistence among our countries. We believe that tolerance is the foundation that has made possible the historic convergence on our continent of peoples from all corners of the world. We are linked to our Latin American neighbours by the desire to live in peace, promote mutual understanding, and defend independence and equality among States.

After 53 years of the policy of economic asphyxiation against Cuba, MERCOSUR and its associated States continue to believe that the embargo violates the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law, in particular, equality among States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The embargo measures are against the rights to peace, development and the security of sovereign States. Moreover, those measures contravene the norms of the multilateral trade system and the very nature of the World Trade Organization.

The embargo also violates the principles of justice and human rights, and causes hardship and suffering among the entire Cuba people. It restricts economic and social progress and prevents the achievement of international development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore regret the fact that the embargo imposed unilaterally on Cuba by the United States of America still remains unchanged, even in the twenty-first century. An increase in the restrictions on financial transactions between Cuba and third countries is a major hindrance to direct dialogue.

The States members of MERCOSUR and associated States reject, on principle, all unilateral and extraterritorial measures. We believe that such measures cause irreparable damage to the well-being of people and prevent the process of regional integration. We also condemn the implementation of coercive unilateral measures contrary to the principles of free trade. The blockade has been the main obstacle to the economic and social development of Cuba and has hampered international cooperation. MERCOSUR and its associated States reiterate their unconditional support for draft resolution A/68/L.6, reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism as the legitimate instrument for resolving conflicts, an effective way to promote international cooperation and understanding among peoples.

It is clear that the United Nations and the international community reject the inhumane measures in question, which was made clear to us in 2012, when 188 Member States voted in favour of the resolution.

Trying to restrict the ability of the Cuban Government to gain access to what it needs in order to ensure health care, education and technological assistance and to provide food to its people only harms Cubans, who have the right to development. The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba is nothing other than an example of obsolete policies that have no place in today's world. In adopting the draft resolution, the Assembly will prove once again its undeniable political will to defend the ideals of freedom, solidarity and respect for sovereignty and international law.

I shall now speak in my national capacity.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its firm rejection and denunciation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on the brotherly people of Cuba. Such measures are a flagrant violation of international law and particularly of the respect for State sovereignty, the right of a people to self-determination, non-intervention in Cuba's internal affairs, freedom of navigation and trade and the peaceful settlement of disputes. We have emphasized that such unilateral coercive measures have an extraterritorial impact that affects the freedom to trade enshrined in the World Trade Organization and its constituent instruments and prevents third-party States from maintaining free and sovereign economic, financial and trade relations with the Republic of Cuba.

However, the United States Government's illegal blockade of Cuba has not blocked solidarity among peoples, particularly the cooperation and reciprocity that exist between Venezuela and Cuba. One of the beneficiaries of the cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela has been the pressing issue of our people's welfare in the area of health care. I would like to recall that on 30 October 2000, the then-Presidents of Cuba and Venezuela, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez Frías, signed a historically significant cooperative agreement on health, designed to improve Venezuela's health-care system. Tomorrow is the thirteenth anniversary of that agreement, which has made a significant contribution to raising Venezuela's human development indicators and thus to the country's ability to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Attempting to use an embargo to diminish the Government of Cuba's capacity is an interventionist action on the part of the United States Government, but what is even more serious is the attempt to punish a people for choosing their own Government, an issue that runs contrary to the nature of the American people themselves, who surely do not support such a position.

Our Bolivarian Government and people demand that the Government of the United States comply with the resolutions that the General Assembly has adopted since 1991 by an overwhelming majority, and move to immediately and definitively lift the inhumane, more than 50-year-long blockade, which constitutes a morally unacceptable collective punishment. Removing those unilateral measures would represent a demonstration on the part of the United States of its commitment to multilateralism based on respect for international law, which is a key factor in strengthening peace, cooperative solidarity and sustainable economic and social development, including respect for human rights and understanding between peoples.

Finally, we enthusiastically support draft resolution A/67/L.6, which is no less than a cry on the part of the vast majority of the peoples and Governments of the world, asking the United States Government to abide by the standards of international law.

Mr. Bart (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I have the honour to address the Assembly on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), namely, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Saint Kitts and Nevis.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Every year for the past 22 consecutive years, we have gathered in this setting to mingle our voices with the many others opposed to the imposition by the United States of its economic, commercial and financial embargo on the Republic of Cuba. For 53 years the Cuban people have endured severe economic loss and stagnation, preventing the expansion of their country's commercial ties to the rest of the world. The embargo has persisted for too long, in spite of the unambiguous and overwhelming objection of a majority of Member States, as demonstrated by the annual adoption of a draft resolution, such as that before us today (A/68/L.6).

Last year, 188 Member States voted in favour of the resolution 67/4, under the same agenda item. The United Nations is made up of 193 Member States. That speaks volumes in the international community. The people of Cuba, however, continue to be stifled by the blockade. The social, economic and humanitarian costs of the embargo are becoming more and more acute. Cuba's security and advance preparedness and the pace of its recovery from disasters are compromised by the embargo's many direct and indirect effects. Indeed, it is in such times of national crisis that the fundamental injustice of the Cuban embargo is brought into sharpest

focus. When viewed in the light of the generosity and selfless assistance that Cuba has kindly accorded other States in times of need, the unilateral application of the embargo against Cuba is seen to be especially ill conceived. Such events underscore the need, not for intensification of punitive measures, but rather for greater regional and international cooperation and solidarity.

As a bloc of States that are small in size, the Caribbean Community greatly values the strength that lies in its collective capacity and will, and maintains a firm stance on common principles that promote our shared objectives. Those principles include adherence to the Charter of the United Nations, multilateralism, sovereignty and free trade. It is in that spirit that the Caribbean Community has remained unstinting in its solidarity with Cuba and in calling for an end to a embargo that runs counter to both the letter and the spirit of the Charter and serves no justifiable legal, political or moral purpose within contemporary international relations.

Despite such significant challenges, Cuba continues to show itself to be a key regional and international partner and actor. CARICOM member States, in keeping with our policy of mutual respect, of being good neighbours and of respect for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, continue to have good relations with Cuba, which have remained cordial and resilient despite the continually evolving hemispheric and international geopolitical landscape. Cuba maintains embassies in all independent countries of the Caribbean Community and continues to prove itself to be an integral part of the Caribbean.

In that context, CARICOM and Cuba have developed and enjoyed mutually beneficial programmes of cooperation and trade in a number of key areas, including physical education, sports, accounting, the natural sciences, the humanities, the economy, special education, and health and medicine. In that regard, CARICOM also profoundly appreciates Cuba's proposals for other areas of cooperation with the Community, such as the treatment of physical disabilities, the arts, language training, agriculture and fisheries, water and infrastructure.

In the Caribbean alone, Cuba has built hospitals and clinics, provided medicines and furnished doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals — contributions that continue to be received and remembered with the utmost appreciation. Students from the Caribbean Community have benefited from university educations in Cuba free of charge, and Cuba has unselfishly extended much generosity to the CARICOM member State of Haiti, following the devastating earthquake there. During the fourth CARICOM-Cuba Summit, held in December 2011 in Port-of-Spain, the heads of State and Government of CARICOM issued a statement strongly rejecting the imposition of the embargo and its extraterritorial effects and celebrating the outcome of the Summit in its reinforcement of the strong fraternal bonds between CARICOM and Cuba. That position is reiterated here today.

CARICOM member States also continue to value and enjoy long-established, warm and friendly relations with the United States of America. It is, therefore, in that spirit that we urge its Government to heed the calls of the international community to end the embargo. In that regard, we also encourage engagement in a constructive process of dialogue and the normalization of relations. We believe that that would be in the interest of all parties and would significantly contribute to greater peaceful development and cooperation within the Americas.

We must not be content to be a mere symbol of change. Accordingly, CARICOM delegations fully support the draft resolution before the General Assembly entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/68/L.6), and we will vote for its adoption.

Mr. Adeeb (India): I am honoured to make a statement on this important agenda item. India associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This is the twenty-second successive year that the Assembly has been deliberating on the decades-old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. Every one of those years, the Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of people around the world. The Assembly has also called upon all States to respect their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law and to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States and affect the legitimate

interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and freedom of trade and navigation.

Despite the repeated calls of the General Assembly, its resolutions remain unimplemented, in contravention of world opinion. Such disregard of the collective will of the international community expressed through the United Nations undermines the credibility of this institution and weakens multilateralism. India strongly supports the categorical rejection by the international community of domestic laws with extraterritorial impact.

The embargo on Cuba has resulted in immense suffering for the Cuban people. It is a violation of the right of a sovereign State to develop and to enjoy freedom of trade, economy and navigation. The embargo has denied a life of dignity to the people of Cuba and has severely undermined the progress of that country. The adverse impact of the embargo has been made worse by the global economic and financial crisis and the rise in global food and energy prices. The embargo has also denied the Cuban economy access to markets, investments and technology, which are needed for rapid and inclusive development.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has noted that the embargo limits key policy options for the Cuban Government, and its efforts to update the economic model of the country are hampered by the embargo. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has pointed out that the embargo has very negative implications for Cuba's balance of trade and foreign exchange earnings and the country's supply of food and agriculture products, and has a direct effect on the food security of the vulnerable segments of the population. The Office of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations system in Cuba has further brought to our attention the fact that the embargo has a pervasive impact on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of human development in Cuba, affecting the most vulnerable socioeconomic groups of the Cuban population in particular. Those instances are clear evidence of the immense suffering caused to the Cuban people as a result of the embargo.

We believe that differences between countries should be solved through dialogue and negotiation in a spirit of mutual respect for each other's independence and sovereignty and of non-interference in others' internal affairs. It is of utmost importance that the spirit of multilateralism embodied by the United Nations be respected.

Before concluding, permit me to reiterate India's opposition to unilateral measures that are taken by countries and impinge on the sovereignty of other countries, including attempts to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations. India joins other nations in calling for an immediate end to the embargo against Cuba. India supports the draft resolution sponsored by Cuba (A/68/L.6).

Mr. Lasso Mendoza (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Republic of Ecuador, I have the honour of welcoming the presence here today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the sisterly Republic of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, who will introduce, on behalf of his people and for the twenty-second time, the text of a draft resolution that is aimed only at achieving justice and is entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Ecuador will, as always, vote in favour of the draft resolution, because it is a clear way to express our solidarity and consistency in this matter. Furthermore, our Constitution condemns interference by States in the internal affairs of other States, whatever form such interference takes. We therefore openly condemn and reject the infamous Helms-Burton Act, which is indeed the basis for the immoral embargo against the sisterly Republic of Cuba. That unilateral action by the United States generates serious consequences with broad impact and constitutes a clear violation of the principles of sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and freedom of international trade and navigation, enshrined in both the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal instruments.

It is disconcerting that within this Organization we should be talking about the post-2015 development programme and the integration of the pillars of sustainable development, while at the same time we are assessing the economic damage to Cuba's trade and external sector caused by the embargo. It blockades the country's population and clearly weakens all efforts to achieving the internationally agreed goals.

It seems only right that the resolutions of the United Nations be implemented. We have voted in favour of this resolution for 22 years. Not only it is frustrating not to put an end to the infamous embargo, but we are demonstrating the inability of the Organization to bring to fruition processes that are undoubtedly in the interest

of international peace and security — fundamental precepts of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Khalil (Egypt): First of all, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and assure him of Egypt's continued support and solidarity.

I align myself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; Ethiopia on behalf of the African Group; and Djibouti on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Sixty-eight years ago, almost to the day, on 24 October 1945, the Charter of the United Nations entered into force. One of its main purposes is to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. For the past 53 years, the United States of America, one of the founders of the United Nations, has been violating that noble purpose by imposing a unilateral embargo against Cuba — an embargo that is morally unjustifiable and legally indefensible and which runs counter to the norms of international law.

Last year, 188 countries voted in favour of resolution 67/4, calling for an immediate end to the embargo. Egypt finds it troubling that despite that quasi-unanimous rejection of the embargo, the screws are still being tightened against Cuba, in total disregard of the stance of the international community. The damage caused by the embargo on Cuba is enormous. It affects crucial sectors of the country's economy and the well-being of the Cuban people. The embargo also has negative repercussions on companies and citizens from third countries.

Despite the undue economic and social hardship, Cubans have continued to make developmental gains, most notably in education, health care and gender equality. We salute their determination and resilience in the face of adversity.

The American Administration has recently stated that it will engage with Cuba. Those encouraging words have regrettably not been translated into action. The punitive measures imposed on Cuba persist, and with them the suffering of a brave nation continues. The United States cannot indefinitely ignore the will of the international community. It cannot forever turn a blind eye to what is right and what is wrong. That goes against its values, history and tradition. That is why today we once again send this message to the United States:

(*spoke in Spanish*):

End the embargo now.

(*spoke in English*):

We hope that this time our call will not go unheard.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to start my statement by welcoming the presence among us of Comrade Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia aligns itself with the statements made earlier on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Southern Common Market.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/68/116) once again makes apparent the global rejection of the economic, commercial and financial embargo that the United States of America has arbitrarily and unilaterally imposed against the Cuban people and against humanity. The embargo affects international cooperation. It affects health and food, education, culture and sports in Cuba. It affects Cuba's foreign trade and foreign investment. It has banking and financial consequences. It affects construction, tourism, industry, communications, the energy and mining sector, transportation, civil aviation and the sugar industry. The embargo is an example of the unilateralism with which the United States operates in the world. Despite the embargo, however, Cuba is an example of socioeconomic development, cooperation and solidarity.

Bolivia comes again to join the community of nations to repudiate most energetically the criminal embargo, which has become one of the deepest open wounds that lacerate the spirit of the whole human family. The United States is unilaterally imposing an unjust embargo. The United States is unilaterally imposing an illegitimate embargo. The United States is unilaterally imposing an immoral embargo. The United States is unilaterally imposing an illegal embargo. The United States is unilaterally imposing an extraterritorial embargo that violates the aims, principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The United States is imposing an embargo that is damaging the principles of sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, and freedom of trade and navigation. It is imposing an

embargo that seeks to undermine the Cuban people's right to self-determination and the efforts of their Government to fight poverty and inequality.

I have here with me all the resolutions that the General Assembly has adopted against the embargo. For more than 20 years, one resolution after another has rejected the embargo that the United States has unilaterally imposed on the Cuban people. Now is the time for the Assembly and the United Nations to ensure respect for the decisions that the Assembly has adopted.

From this rostrum, the President of the United States described to the members of the Assembly what he called the "exceptional" nature of his country (see A/68/PV.5). If that country is exceptional, then the rest of us, the other members of the international community, by some twist of destiny have not been blessed with such exceptionality. Not only is that speech dangerous; not only is it offensive; not only does it reveal criminal intent with regard to the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes of this Organization; it also shows, as President Evo Morales has stated, the arrogance of a Government that is against all peoples. The Government of the United States is not exceptional, although it is unique. It is responsible for this genocidal blockade, which is without parallel in the history of mankind. It is unique because it does not respect international law. It is unique because it is not interested in multilateralism. It is unique because it also acts with the most flagrant impunity.

Bolivia once again decisively supports the draft resolution that will be presented to the Assembly today (A/68/L.6). We also would like to thank the Cuban people for their wonderful solidarity, which has saved tens of thousands of lives in my country. Once again in this Assembly, the world calls for, the world requests, the world demands an end to the blockade against Cuba.

Allow me, Mr. President, to break with protocol for a moment and conclude my statement by saying: Viva Cuba!

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Let me begin by welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on this agenda item (A/68/116).

The Chinese delegation associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For 21 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted, by an overwhelming majority, resolutions on the need to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. In them the Assembly urges all countries to abide by the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of international law and to repeal or invalidate any laws or measures that are of an extraterritorial nature, that infringe upon the sovereignty of another State or the legitimate rights and interests of the entities and individuals under the jurisdiction of that State, and that have an adverse impact on freedom of trade and navigation.

Regrettably, however, those resolutions have never been effectively implemented, and the United States continues to impose an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. That has inflicted enormous economic and financial losses on Cuba. The data shows that, taking into account the depreciation of the dollar against gold in the international markets, by April 2013, the embargo had resulted in direct economic losses to Cuba in the amount of $1,157,327,000,000.

The embargo has led to shortages of supplies and seriously undermined the Cuban economy, creating tremendous obstacles to Cuba's economic and social development. The embargo has caused enormous suffering for the Cuban people and has severely impeded their efforts to eradicate poverty, promote economic and social development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It has violated the basic human rights of the Cuban people to food, health and education and their right to survival and development. It has not only caused major setbacks for the Cuban economy, but also affected the normal economic, commercial and financial interactions between Cuba and other countries, thereby undermining the interests and sovereignty of third countries.

The embargo against Cuba is strongly opposed by the majority of Member States, as it is a blatant violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant General Assembly resolutions. The call of the international community is getting louder and louder, demanding that the United States Government change its policy towards Cuba, lift the embargo and normalize its relations with Cuba. That fact has been fully reflected in the Secretary-General's report this year.

The Chinese Government has always advocated that countries develop mutual relations on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter while respecting the right of other countries to independently

choose their own social system and development path. China is opposed to any unilateral sanctions against other countries by military, political, economic or other means. Meanwhile, China has strictly followed and implemented the relevant Assembly resolutions. China and Cuba have maintained normal economic, trade and personnel exchanges. Our friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields has been growing. This is what our two peoples want, and it is in the interest of Cuba's economic and social development.

In today's world, dialogue, exchanges and harmonious coexistence represent the mainstream of international relations. Exchanges and cooperation on an equal footing among countries have become the dominant trend. The best way to settle differences and disputes is dialogue on an equal footing and friendly consultation. China hopes that the United States will act according to the purposes and principles of the Charter and the relevant Assembly resolutions and terminate its embargo against Cuba as soon as possible. China also hopes for a steady improvement of the United States-Cuba relationship, which would in turn advance stability and development in Latin America and the Caribbean region.

China will once again vote in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Cuba under this agenda item (A/68/L.6).

Mr. Percaya (Indonesia): Let me begin by warmly welcoming Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla and assuring him of Indonesia's unwavering support for ending the embargo against Cuba.

The delegation of Indonesia associates itself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Fiji and the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

The General Assembly, as the highest political forum of the United Nations, has consistently opposed the unilateral policy imposed by the United States on Cuba. The majority of Member States have expressed their concern about the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and the adverse effects of such measures on the Cuban people. While the Cuban people have endured the economic, commercial and financial embargo valiantly for 52 years, that has come at a forbidding cost.

The continued imposition of that embargo violates the principles of the sovereign equality of all Members of the United Nations and of non-intervention and non-interference in one another's domestic affairs. It violates international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.

The Charter is clear on the need for nations to develop friendly relations among themselves. It is equally emphatic about the importance of nations refraining from actions that threaten the political independence of others or lead to interventions in matters that are essentially within a State's domestic jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, the sanctions have also had an indirect impact on countries with economic and commercial ties to Cuba and thus encroach on the sovereignty of other States and their national jurisdictions. The embargo not only creates political complications, it also causes economic, commercial and financial hardships that, on humanitarian grounds, cannot be justified. That is a great burden for a developing country whose people would benefit tremendously from cooperation rather than confrontation. The embargo has caused hardships for the people of Cuba, particularly vulnerable groups. Against that backdrop, the General Assembly must once again reaffirm its position by supporting draft resolution A/68/L.6.

The international community is quite confident that engagement will do more than isolation to advance the noble causes that all States Members of the United Nations subscribe to. Dialogue has always been a constructive avenue for dissolving tensions. The time is ripe for relations between the two principal parties to be transformed through constructive engagement. Lifting the embargo would be in keeping with the spirit of the times. It would also demonstrate unambiguous respect for the principle of non-intervention, as embodied in the Charter and in international law. While it is true that some small, meaningful changes have occurred in recent times, such as the easing of restrictions on travel to Cuba and the removal of obstacles to the transfer of remittances, the preferable outcome is for the embargo to be lifted immediately. We all hope to see the tensions between the two countries resolved and harmonious, peaceful coexistence permeating their relations.

In an international climate marked by cooperation, the embargo has become an anachronistic policy. Indonesia has repeatedly voted in favour of lifting the embargo on Cuba, as an expression of our long-standing and irrevocable commitment to the principles

and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Indonesia rejects the use of any unilateral measures to exert pressure on States. For that reason, it has never promulgated or applied any laws of the type referred to in the draft resolution. We do not support or apply any laws and policies of an extraterritorial nature, since that would interfere with others' domestic affairs as well as with freedom of international trade and navigation.

Indonesia urges the renunciation of the application of laws and measures of an extraterritorial nature that affect the sovereignty of other States, the lawful interests of their subjects or other persons under their jurisdiction, and freedom of trade and navigation.

Finally, Indonesia supports and calls for the immediate cessation of such an embargo.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): At the outset, I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to convey through him the greetings of the people and leadership of Algeria to the people and leadership of Cuba.

Algeria aligns itself with the statements made earlier by the representatives of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement; Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of African States; and Djibouti on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Algeria would like to reiterate its deep concern about the continuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo unilaterally imposed for more than five decades now by the United States of America against Cuba. Annually, for many consecutive years, the members of the General Assembly have adopted, almost unanimously, a resolution calling for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. That reflects the international community's profound determination to put an end to a situation that has lasted far too long. Through those resolutions, the international community has continued to reaffirm that Cuba, like all other States Members of the United Nations, has the right to freedom of trade and navigation and to expand trade with its economic partners.

In accordance with the principles of its foreign policy, Algeria has always condemned the extraterritorial application of laws and all forms of coercive economic and trade measures, such as this economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which contradicts international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Every Member State should respect the principles of the Charter, including, in particular, the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, and non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of any other State.

It is a fact that the blockade has a negative effect on the well-being of the Cuban people on a daily basis and causes huge material losses and economic damage to Cuba. Those consequences have been exacerbated by the adverse effects of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis, which has seriously compromised Cuba's development efforts. This is highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/116), based on information provided by more than 100 Governments and by a significant number of entities and agencies of the United Nations system concerning the implementation of last year's resolution 67/4. The embargo frustrates efforts to achieve all the internationally agreed development goals, including the all-important Millennium Development Goals, and negatively affects South-South cooperation and international cooperation generally.

Here it is important to recall the long-standing positions of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China on the issue. Accordingly, Algeria will vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

Mr. Imakando (Zambia): I have the honour to address the Assembly on the matter relating to the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba (A/68/L.6).

My delegation wishes to align this statement with those delivered earlier by the representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Ethiopia on behalf of the African Group; and Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Zambia is concerned that after more than two decades, the General Assembly is still debating an agenda item on which there has been overwhelming consensus. This is so because, despite the clear message from the United Nations, the United States has maintained the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Unless immediate efforts are undertaken to restore normalcy in economic relations,

history will judge all of us in the United Nations family rather harshly.

The Cold War is long over, and in its place nations have been seeking to consolidate the era of international cooperation, with the United Nations taking centre stage. My delegation therefore urges that we not lose this opportunity for all-inclusive global prosperity and for securing the peaceful coexistence of future generations.

My delegation wishes further to stress that the United States embargo against the people of Cuba cannot have a place in the twenty-first century. Instead, the world should rightly focus its attention on enhancing the livelihoods of all people in all nations, Cuba included. Indeed, the Cuban nation should be helped to consolidate its growth and development in a manner that allows for the free participation of all citizens. In other words, the unilateral embargo has no role when we are setting the stage for the post-2015 development agenda. It is on this score that we stand with the global chorus for the unconditional lifting of the embargo against Cuba.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Zambia has no doubt that the time is ripe for Cuba and the United States to free themselves from a stand-off dating from a long-gone era, when the majority of their current citizens had not even been born. The present generations know little of the cause of the age-old impasse, hence we must give them a chance to enjoy normalcy. We therefore reiterate once again our call on the United States to lift the embargo.

During the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, Zambia was one of the 188 countries that supported resolution 67/4. Our stance is rooted in principle, and we wish to use this occasion to re-state our solidarity with the Cuban people. We remain concerned that their development continues to be unnecessarily impeded to this day. That is in direct contradiction of the spirit of international cooperation that we have all been aspiring towards. For this reason, my delegation is confident that the Assembly will once again deliver a clear message of its support, which His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, will take back to the Cuban people.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time I have taken the floor at this session, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to serve as President of the General Assembly. I am convinced that with your excellent skill and experience, you will guide this session of the Assembly most successfully.

We welcome His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The States Members of the United Nations have held substantive and serious discussions, at many successive sessions, on the absolute necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against the Republic of Cuba. Their common view is that this issue has had significant and wide-reaching implications for international relations and the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The great majority of Member States have expressed their staunch protest against this embargo and have urgently called for it to be brought to an end.

Viet Nam will once again join with the international community to vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.6.

(*spoke in English*)

In so doing, Viet Nam entirely shares the view that the embargo unilaterally imposed by the United States is at variance with the purposes of the United Nations and constitutes a violation of the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. These include sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, the right of self-determination, peaceful coexistence and freedom of trade. This issue is very much a case about upholding the rule of law at the international level.

We would again like to stress in particular the need for dialogue and negotiations to settle differences or disputes among States. This has proven to be essential to the strengthening of peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is also essential for peace, security and normal international interactions in all other parts of the world, and for enhancing international cooperation as the international community is facing so many challenges. In this regard, we welcome the call and proposal by the Government of Cuba to discuss

with the United States their differences and issues of mutual interest.

The embargo has obviously caused enormous damage to the socioeconomic development of Cuba and the life of the country's people, especially women and children. For all the many updates and reports about negative impact of the embargo, the human suffering is undoubtedly immeasurable. The embargo is an encroachment on human rights. It is also one of the obstacles that need to be removed to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the reduction of poverty and the advancement of sustainable development in the post-2015 period. It is very pertinent to the theme of this session of the General Assembly, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". Viet Nam therefore calls on the United States, in implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions, to lift the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate Viet Nam's support for the right of the people of Cuba to choose their path of development. We appreciate the significant achievements that the Government and people of Cuba have made in many areas, in spite of the numerous challenges. We welcome their active contribution to international cooperation in the region and in other parts of the world to promote friendly relations among countries and in the resolution of issues related to socioeconomic development.

Viet Nam fully subscribes to the contents of the draft resolution before us and again urges its full implementation after its adoption.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I too should like to greet Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla of Cuba, who is here among us today.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Gropu of 77 and China, of Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and of Venezuela on behalf of the Southern Common Market.

Brazil reiterates its firm opposition to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, as well as to the extraterritorial application of domestic laws and discriminatory trade practices. Brazil urges Governments that have not complied with resolution 67/4 to take immediate measures to put an end to discriminatory trade practices and economic, trade and financial embargoes that have been adopted unilaterally.

As a founding nation of the Organization, which was born out of the rubble and bloody remnants of war to celebrate a culture of peace, we call on all Governments to demonstrate their full commitment to international law, diplomacy, the peaceful settlement of disputes, cooperation in the economic and trade area and the primacy of the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

Resolution 67/4 calls for an immediate end to the adoption and implementation of unilateral measures that have an adverse effect on other nations and people. The extraterritorial nature of such measures is a flagrant contravention of the basic principles of international law, particularly sovereignty and freedom of trade and navigation. Such action is unacceptable, particularly when it has an impact on humanitarian aid, such as when the Brazilian contribution of $100,000 to the Cuban victims of Hurricane Sandy was blocked by the United States authorities last year. The transfer of funds from the Bank of Brazil branch in Miami to a bank in Geneva is still awaiting clearance from the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the United States Department of the Treasury.

Thus, apart from the illegal blockade, which runs counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the embargo also affects human rights, the rights of refugees and the rights of women and children, who should, first and foremost, be given priority as the poorest and most vulnerable among us. Brazil commends Cuba for updating its economic model and supports it in its domestic and foreign policies. Cuba's progress is being impeded by the economic embargo, which has afflicted its people for decades.

The Brazilian Government will continue not only to oppose the economic, financial and trade embargo against Cuba, but also to foster friendlier and warmer political and economic relations as a gesture from Brazil in solidarity with Latin America and the Caribbean. We believe that there is no America without the full participation of Cuba in all areas of international relations. Today, there is consensus among Latin American and Caribbean countries regarding the impossibility of holding future American summits without Cuba being present. Calls for Cuba's full freedom and independence have always been made by Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole. Today, that is true more than ever before.

Mr. Martins (Angola): Allow me to begin by extending a warm welcome to His Excellency Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Cuba. I wish him a very fruitful stay at the United Nations, a place he knows well.

The Republic of Angola associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Ethiopia on behalf of the African Group, of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Republic of Angola reaffirms its commitment to putting an immediate end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, and with that in mind, we will vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.6, which we hope will be adopted by a majority during this meeting and implemented thereafter.

Angola joins the international community in condemning the embargo against Cuba, which has lasted more than half a century and which flagrantly violates the inalienable rights of the Cuban people. It is unacceptable that in the twenty-first century, one country's unilateral decision can deprive another country and its people of their right to enjoy their fundamental freedoms and to exercise freely their political, economic or commercial rights.

Angola regrets the continuation of the embargo, even after the General Assembly's successive resolutions requesting all member States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, to repeal all laws, regulations and extraterritorial measures that undermine the sovereignty of States, and the rights and legitimate interests of entities and persons under the jurisdiction of such States and that have negative impact on their freedom and their trade and navigation rights.

According to the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/166), there is no record of measures by the Government of the United States that would contribute to ending the embargo against Cuba, even though the restrictions it imposes are contrary to the purposes of the Charter and constitute a violation of international law. In that sense, what is happening in Cuba is a flagrant violation of the rights to peace and development and to safeguarding the sovereignty of States.

The ban goes beyond the commercial and financial relations between the United States and Cuba; it has implications that severely penalize the Cuban people, since it prevents the implementation of economic programmes aimed at the socioeconomic stability of the country as well as its global integration.

Angola reaffirms its commitment to international law, and from that perspective, it supports decisions that contribute to the elimination of all coercive unilateral economic measures used as a means of political persuasion against any sovereign State.

We call on the international community to continue its efforts to deepen its commitment to promoting a constructive dialogue between the two countries for a permanent solution to the problem and to finding a path of normalization in their relations. After more than half a century, the embargo on Cuba is a clear demonstration of a lack of political will, and it is also anachronistic.

To conclude, we appeal to the United States to reconsider its unilateral position, whose negative impact on the life of the Cuban people shows clear signs of inhumanity.

Mr. Govender (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, of Ethiopia on behalf of the Africa Group and of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation also extends greetings to His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, who is present here today.

South Africa acknowledges the report of the Secretary-General (A/68/116), which emphasizes, among other principles, the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and the freedom of international trade and navigation, which are also enshrined in many international legal instruments.

Cuba is still in the clutches of the unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo that was imposed on it by the United States of America over five decades ago, despite the fact that the Assembly has been seized with the matter since its forty-sixth session, which was 22 years ago. The continued unilateral embargo imposed on Cuba constitutes clear disregard for international law. It is also a flagrant violation of the Cuban people's right to development, peace and security. Furthermore, the embargo runs contrary to the principles, purposes and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, especially the principles of the

sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Member States.

In essence, however, what is at the heart of the economic, commercial and financial embargo is an attempt to prevent Cuba from freely deciding on its own political and economic system. After more than 50 years of the embargo, Cuba's economic, social and overall development has been stunted. Misguided as it is, the embargo is one of the major causes of Cuba's economic problems and the main obstacle to its economic and social development. The embargo has unfortunately inhibited every aspect of Cuba's trade, including free access to humanitarian materials such as food and medicines.

There is no legitimate or moral reason to maintain the embargo. We therefore call for the embargo to be lifted urgently. Cuba's prospects for economic recovery and social development will remain elusive unless the economic, commercial and financial embargo is lifted. What is also clear is that as long as the status quo persists, there are very limited prospects for Cuba to benefit in a meaningful way from the United Nations-driven post-2015 development agenda.

What exacerbates the matter even further is that the punitive measures of the economic embargo are applied extraterritorially. Companies, which naturally migrate to larger and more lucrative markets, shy away from conducting business or having trade relations with Cuba. That is due to the fear of the economic and political repercussions that are imposed against parties who are alleged to have violated the blockade. Given that fact, we can say that the prospects for Cuba's economic development are stifled owing to the continued lack of access to foreign direct investment, large-scale tourism and even foreign banking institutions. Despite such challenges, the Cuban people have always remained true to the principle of solidarity, even beyond their own borders. We know this because we have benefited from their solidarity.

It is for those reasons that South Africa has always voted in favour of the draft resolutions on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba and will always be committed to the principles, purpose and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, we support draft resolution A/68/L.6 because it is the people of Cuba themselves — women, children, the elderly and the vulnerable — who bear the brunt of the stranglehold that has suffocated their country's livelihood for over 50 years now.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to introduce draft resolution A/68/L.6.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Department of Commerce of the United States has laid out the following conditions that must be met for a license to be issued authorizing any equipment, device or medicine to be supplied to Havana's William Soler Children's Heart Centre: the items in question must be used exclusively to treat Cuban patients; the final destination of the items must be monitored; they must not be used to commit acts of torture or human rights violations; and they must not be used in biotechnological production processes or re-exported. Appendix E of the license questionnaire requires copious documentation to ensure that the Heart Centre is in no way linked to the production of chemical or biological weapons, missile technologies or nuclear weapons.

Dozens of prestigious specialists, at least five renowned United States hospitals and many others around the world know the Cuban Centre very well and know that it specializes in paediatric cardiology and cardiological surgery. Since 2010, it has performed heart surgery on 1,101 children and cared for tens of thousands of little patients. However, the Heart Centre continues to be classified by the Department of Commerce as a "denied" hospital.

Consequently, Cuban boys and girls cannot be treated with an Amplatzer device, which is used to cure inter-atrial communication problems or close vascular short-circuits inside the heart's arterial pathways. Nor can they be treated with devices commonly used for catheterization or receive better quality, cutting-edge anti-arrhythmic and antibiotic drugs for the treatment of heart failure. As a result, dozens of minors have had to undergo thoracic surgeries that could have otherwise been avoided. Another 102 children suffering from pulmonary hypertension could not be treated with nitric oxide, which is one of the best therapeutic drugs available.

Likewise, the Cardiovascular Surgery Institute lacks the spare parts, opaque dyes and complex software necessary to perform echocardiograms. The Frank País Orthopaedic Hospital cannot replace its Sopha gamma camera, which is required for diagnosing malignant

tumours and bone and joint infections. The Pedro Kouri Institute of Tropical Medicine is not allowed to purchase Kaletra, an anti-viral oral solution for children, since it has no license from the Treasury Department to import it. That medicine inhibits the replication of the HIV virus in children who are born with HIV, boosts their immunological system and prevents opportunistic diseases.

The human suffering caused by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba is incalculable. It imposes hardship and is a massive, flagrant and systematic violation of human rights. 76 per cent of Cubans have lived under its devastating effects their entire lives. The blockade has been classified as an act of genocide under article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and an act of economic warfare under the Declaration concerning the Laws of Naval War adopted in 1909.

The State Department lies about and manipulates the data on remittances sent by émigrés and creates obstacles to the transfer of small donations by non-governmental organizations, with the purpose of portraying its Government as a donor of humanitarian assistance to our nation. A memorandum from the then United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lester Mallory, dated 6 April 1960 and declassified 30 years later, states:

> "The majority of Cubans support Castro .. There is no effective political opposition ... The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life [of Cuba], denying money and supplies ... to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the Government".

It is barbaric and incredible that 53 years later, the same policy still prevails.

The economic damage that has accumulated after half a century of the blockade amounts to $1,126 billion — more than $1 trillion. Nevertheless, we have achieved undeniable results in the eradication of hunger and poverty and with health and education indicators that are renowned worldwide, as well as in promoting gender equality, equality in freedom and well-being, social consensus, citizens' democratic participation in Government decisions, reversals of environmental deterioration and the development of international cooperation with 100 third-world countries. How much more could we have done without that colossal obstacle to our development and the enormous human and financial costs it has imposed on us?

Under President Obama's Administration the blockade has grown even more severe, particularly in the financial sector. Historically, the United States has used the enormous technological power of its recently denounced massive global espionage system to follow and monitor our financial transactions and economic relations. From January 2009 to September 2013, the fines imposed on 30 North American and foreign entities for their relations with Cuba and other countries have amounted to more than $2.446 billion. In December 2012, for the same reason, the British bank HSBC and the Japanese bank Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ were fined $375 million and $8.6 million, respectively. In March 2013, the Reuters press agency suspended its banking and financial information services. The economic siege has been ramped up, and its impact can be seen in the scarcities and difficulties that Cuban families suffer from in every aspect of their lives.

The United States is not a trading partner of Cuba, despite what has been shamelessly asserted by its representatives, because a State to which it is impossible to export products or from which it is impossible to buy services and products cannot be said to be a trading partner. Nor can a State where United States dollars cannot be used in transactions, or whose subsidiaries in third-party countries are forbidden to buy foodstuffs or medicines, owing to the Torricelli Act, which also bans the entry into United States ports for 180 days of any ship in the world that has docked at our island; or a State that prevents other nations from selling to Cuba any merchandise containing more than 10 per cent of United States components or from exporting to the United States any product containing Cuban raw materials. No State can be a trading partner when it implements the Helms-Burton Act, which expanded the extraterritorial scope of the blockade and comprehensively codified the regime change and the eventual intervention in Cuba. No State can be a trading partner when it invokes the Trade with the Enemy Act of 1917, which applies only in war situations and is enforced only for Cuba.

Our small island poses no threat to the national security of the super-Power. Why, then, can Americans

not have access to top-quality Cuban products or Cuban next-generation medicines? Why are their businesspeople losing opportunities? Why are businesses not being opened that could create jobs in a time of crisis? Why can American companies not have access to the new Mariel special development zone? The sanctions remain intact and are being fully implemented. That is not a bilateral issue. The blockade is aggressively extraterritorial and is a violation of international law that damages the sovereignty of every State. It transgresses the international rules that govern trade and the freedom of navigation. The cruel inclusion of medicines and foodstuffs violates international humanitarian law. It is a hostile and unilateral act that should cease unilaterally.

The blockade is the chief obstacle to broader access to the Internet and information and communication technologies, since it restricts our island's bandwidth, increases the cost of connectivity and prevents our connecting to nearby submarine cables. The sanctions seriously restrict contacts between both peoples, and those that are authorized are subject to various conditions and are designed to produce regime change and internal destabilization. Despite the fact that Washington, D.C., has very selectively authorized some cultural, academic and scientific exchanges, they are still severely restricted, while many projects of that kind have not materialized, owing to the denial of licences, visas and other bureaucratic authorizations.

Cuba is the only destination on the planet forbidden to United States citizens. It is a relevant constitutional issue in that American citizens are not equal before the law in such matters, according to whether or not they are of Cuban origin. Cuba's national baseball team has not been able to collect the money owed to it for its participation in the second and third World Baseball Classics, held in 2009 and 2013. The visas of 300 United States runners who intended to participate in the 2012 Marabana marathon were denied. More than 300 musicians who participated in dozens of artistic projects in the United States have not been able to receive their payments.

Cuban emigration is suffering from discriminatory measures. The response to the reform of Cuba's migration law in January has been the continued enforcement of the Cuban Adjustment Act and the "wet foot/dry foot" policy, which encourages illegal and unsafe emigration and human trafficking, resulting in the loss of human lives.

Curiously, the United States Office of Foreign Assets Control confiscated the funds of a British non-governmental organization intended for the purchase and distribution in the United Kingdom of a book by a European author entitled *The Economic War Against Cuba*, published by Monthly Review Press, based in New York. The funds of the Latin American Council of Churches that were intended to cover the costs of its sixth General Assembly in Havana were withheld for three months. The humanitarian cooperation that we extend to dozens of countries, primarily in the areas of medicine and education, is also subject to repression.

The blockade is an uncivilized act that prevents the free circulation of persons, the free flow of information, the exchange of ideas and the development of cultural, sporting and scientific relations.

The United States policy against Cuba suffers from absolute international isolation and disrepute. It lacks all ethical or legal grounds. That has been shown by the more than 180 votes in the General Assembly, the statements made by dozens of Heads of State and Government in the general debate and the opinions contributed by Member States and international organizations to the Secretary-General's report (A/68/116).

President Obama could make use of his ample constitutional powers, without going to Congress, to generate a dynamic that would change the situation. After all, Americans elected him to bring about change. What is to be gained from the inertia of an old, obsolete policy, borne of an antagonistic, unhealthy and ethically unacceptable confrontation that has failed for fifty years? Why not listen to the increasingly prevailing opinion in United States society and among Cuban emigrants, even in Florida, that supports the normalization of bilateral relations and opposes the embargo and the travel ban? Why not accept the fact that we are an independent State with equal sovereignty? Would it not be better to pragmatically renounce the ideological obsession, inherited from United States politicians of two generations ago, a policy that has not worked, and stop spending taxpayer dollars trying, unsuccessfully, to change the Cuban Government?

The State Department's persistence in labelling Cuba, arbitrarily and without grounds, as a State that sponsors international terrorism harms the credibility of the United States, since it was precisely on United States territory that the terrorist actions that caused the

death of 3,478 persons and disabilities to 2,099 were organized. The notorious international terrorist Posada Carriles has found comfortable refuge in Miami, while four of the five Cuban anti-terrorists are serving long and unjust imprisonment sentences. What is preventing the United States Government from setting them free as a humanitarian gesture or act of justice?

The Government of Cuba, with the support of the overwhelming majority and the active participation of its people, continues to pursue a process of far-reaching economic transformation aimed at making our socialist economy more efficient, improving the living standards of the population and preserving the social achievements of the Revolution. Our transformations enjoy broad international recognition and ever-growing cooperation with many nations, in particular those of Latin America and the Caribbean, with which various forms of integration are being strengthened.

The essence of the United States policy towards Cuba remains unaltered and anchored in the Cold War.

The dangers that threaten the existence of our species are grave and imminent. To safeguard human life, we must safeguard peace, and to do so we need a profound change in the way the world's problems and conflicts are addressed and resolved, relying on dialogue and cooperation, without the egocentrism and the philosophy of dispossession that have led to wars and without the use of force or coercive economic measures, which also injure and kill in silence.

It is true that there are big differences between the two Governments, but the only productive way to proceed is to find a civilized way to interact, recognizing that we are neighbouring States but different States and that it is up to each and every people to decide on its own affairs, its political system and its economy, in keeping with its legitimate interests. We must therefore privilege dialogue, negotiation and even cooperation, as far as possible and practicable, to the benefit of both peoples and relations in the hemisphere as a whole.

The recent resumption of talks on migration and postal services, as well as the development of contacts on other issues of mutual interest, such as oil-spill response operations, air and sea search and rescue operations, and air and aviation safety, show that that is both possible and useful.

The Government of Cuba, as an expression of its aspirations towards peace and respectful coexistence, reiterates its determination to make progress towards the normalization of bilateral relations and reiterates its willingness to establish a serious and constructive dialogue on an equal footing and with full respect for our independence.

Once again, on behalf of the selfless, heroic and fraternal people of Cuba, I ask the representatives of the Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/68/L.6 entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/68/L.6.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Godard (United States of America): The United States strongly supports the Cuban people's desire to freely determine their own future. It is the Cuban Government that continues to deprive the Cuban people of the realization of that aspiration.

Like all Member States, the United States conducts its economic relationships with other countries in accordance with its national interests and principles. Our sanctions policy towards Cuba is just one of the tools in our overall effort to encourage respect for civil and human rights in a manner consistent with the Universal Declaration, to which the United Nations itself is committed. We therefore stand in opposition to this draft resolution, and we call on all other nations that support the Cuban people to oppose this draft resolution.

The United States places the highest priority on building and strengthening connections between the Cuban and American people. Those connections give Cubans the support and tools they need to move forward, independent of their Government. United States citizens engaging in well-defined, purposeful travel remain the best ambassadors for our democratic ideals. The hundreds of thousands of Americans who have sent remittances and travelled to the island under various categories of purposeful travel, as promoted by President Obama, are a central part of a strategy to ensure that Cubans have the opportunities they deserve.

Cubans are helped by the revised travel, remittance, information exchange, humanitarian and people-to-people policies, as well as the alternative sources of information, the chance to take advantage of emerging opportunities for self-employment and private property, and the strengthening of independent civil society. In contrast, Cuba's draft resolution (A/68/L.6) seeks to identify an external scapegoat and excuse the Cuban Government for the island's economic problems. However, the Cuban Government has now publicly recognized that those problems are caused by the very economic policies that it has pursued for the past half-century.

While we note and welcome recent changes, such as those that allow greater self-employment and liberalization of the real estate market, Cuba still has one of the most restricted economic systems in the world. Irrespective of United States policy, it is unrealistic to expect the Cuban economy to thrive until the Cuban Government opens its State monopolies to private competition, fully empowers Cuban entrepreneurs, respects intellectual property rights, allows unfettered access to the Internet and adopts the sound macroeconomic policies that have contributed to the success of many of Cuba's neighbouring countries in Latin America.

I want to make clear that the United States is, in fact, a deep and abiding friend of the Cuban people. In 2012, the Cuban people received more than $2 billion in remittances and other private support from the United States. That was made possible by United States policy choices. In 2012, the United States was Cuba's largest supplier of food and agricultural products; it exported nearly $465 million in agricultural products, medical devices, medicine and humanitarian items to Cuba.

By the Cuban Government's own account, the United States is one of Cuba's principal trading partners. Far from restricting aid to the Cuban people, we are proud that the American people and United States companies are among the leading providers of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. All of that trade and assistance is conducted in conformity with our sanctions programme, which is carefully calibrated to allow and encourage the provision of support to the Cuban people.

We remain committed to policies that support the welfare and human rights of individuals in Cuba, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, as set forth in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To help further the enjoyment of that right, we support Cubans in their aspirations for access to the Internet, a goal that the Cuban Government itself now also claims to support. The Cuban Government has failed, however, to offer widespread access to the Internet through its high-speed cable with Venezuela or to pursue other available avenues for increasing Cubans' access to the Internet. Instead, it continues to impose isolation on the Cuban people, while disingenuously blaming the embargo.

Moreover, the Cuban Government continues to detain Alan Gross, an American citizen, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison for facilitating Internet access for Cuba's small Jewish community. The United States calls on Cuba to release Mr. Gross and to tear down the wall of censorship that it has erected around the Cuban people.

The United States continues to call on the Cuban Government to finally allow Cuban citizens to enjoy the political and economic freedoms to which this Organization is committed. The international community cannot in good conscience ignore the ease and frequency with which the Cuban regime silences critics, disrupts peaceful assembly, impedes independent journalism and, despite positive reforms, continues to prevent some Cubans from leaving or returning to the island. The Cuban Government continues its tactics of politically motivated detentions, harassment and police violence against Cuban citizens, such as the Ladies in White, who peacefully seek freedom for political prisoners and advocate on behalf of positive political and social change. The draft resolution serves only to distract from the real problems facing the Cuban people, and therefore, my delegation will oppose it.

We encourage this organ to support the desires of the Cuban people to freely determine their own future. By doing that, it would truly advance the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the purposes for which the United Nations was created.

Ms. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again the international community is meeting in the General Assembly to discuss and approve the draft resolution submitted by the sister Republic of Cuba, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" (A/68/L.6).

Nicaragua, in explaining its vote on the draft resolution submitted by the representative of the Republic of Cuba, takes the opportunity to add its voice to the statements made by representatives of the Group of 77 and China, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas. Nicaragua also welcomes the statements by the representatives of the Caribbean Community, the Union of South American Nations, the Southern Common Market, the African Union, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on the issue before us.

We appreciate the information provided by our fellow colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, brother Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, keeping us up to date on the resurgence of the economic suffocation policy pursued by the United States of America through its continued economic, commercial and financial blockade, the resurgence of the extraterritorial dimension of the blockade and its increased persecution of Cuba's international financial transactions.

It is quite clear to the international community that the blockade is the main obstacle to the economic and social development of that sister nation and its trade ties with the world, and it is an obstacle to the international cooperation that Cuba gives and receives. Our colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, has provided data revealing the depth of the effects on their exports and imports; the lack of access to international credit; the effects on their health system, education system — in sum, damages in all spheres of life affecting the brotherly people of Cuba.

We have listened again, with pain and indignation, and it is increasingly reprehensible to us that a country as powerful as the United States of America should insist on increasing the suffering of the Cuban people by continuing to violate their most basic rights to life, development, health and education.

We are astounded by the cruelty shown by the various United States Administrations from 1959 to the present day against Cuba — a small, wonderful, supportive and fraternal Caribbean island, as transparent as its waters — only because, following its glorious revolution, it did not continue to allow the United States to use its island as its favourite backyard on our continent.

We have just heard the representative of the United States of America explain his country's vote. It was the same explanation of vote, the same arrogance and the same arguments to justify that absurd, out-dated, illegal and morally unsustainable policy that we hear in this Assembly year after year. Not only have those arguments been rejected by the international community, but every day more sectors of American society — academics, businessmen, members of the religious community, scientists and social organizations — are demanding an end to the blockade and the resumption of friendly and cooperative relations with Cuba, as befits two neighbours on an equal footing, without external interference, imperial impositions, blockades or coercive economic measures.

Today, as it has done year after year, the international community will respond once again in support of Cuba and for the lifting of the unjust, illegal and inhumane blockade. We will vote green — the colour of hope, of nature, of life itself — in honour of and with respect for the people and Government of Cuba, which for over 50 years have resisted and fought and will continue doing so, because the United States will never — and I repeat never — break the will of that heroic people in their struggle for their sovereignty, independence, right to self-determination and policies of solidarity, support, fraternity and brotherhood with the people of the world.

As our President, Comandante Daniel Ortega, recently stated:

> "Cuba, subjected to the most brutal aggressions of the Empire, is the best testimony that peoples' freedom, sovereignty, justice, independence and right to peace can be defended and safeguarded, when a revolution, its ideas and its principles is undertaken by a whole population."

We hope that the current United States Administration will reflect and rectify itself by voting in favour of this twenty-second draft resolution, which voices the international community's call for an end once and for all to the inhuman and criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba.

It is imperative that, in the reflection on and rectification of the anachronistic and arbitrary policies towards Cuba that we demand, the United States Government decide once and for all to return the occupied territory of Guantánamo; immediately and unconditionally free the five Cuban anti-terrorist heroes who have suffered in United States prisons for over 15 years, and allow them to return to their families and their people; and immediately remove Cuba from

the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, which is nothing more than a justification by the United States of America for intensifying its practices and policies against Cuba.

Nicaragua reaffirms its well-known position of support for and complete solidarity with the brotherly people and Government of Cuba. As always, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the issue (A/68/L.6). That affirmative vote will reflect the gratitude of hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans who have received the militant solidarity of the brotherly people and Government of Cuba in our struggle for our political and economic independence.

The United States no longer has any argument: the international community knows it and so does the United States. The result of the vote will be more than clear. The United States of America, in its imperial obsession with trying to defeat that heroic people through its blockade, has become a State that violates and disrespects the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law and the only obstructionist State to the agreement of the General Assembly to immediately end this cruel and inhuman blockade against Cuba.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/68/L.6, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau

Draft resolution A/68/L.6 was adopted by 188 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (resolution 68/8).

The President: I now give the floor to those representatives wishing to explain their votes on the resolution just adopted.

Mrs. Kazragienė (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU)and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and

Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The United States trade policy towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. However, American legislation such as the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 has extended the effects of the United States embargo to third-party countries. In the framework of the common commercial policy, the European Union has firmly and continuously opposed such extraterritorial measures.

We appreciate the decision of the Government of the United States to lift restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, but we cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures impede our economic and commercial relations with that country.

To address the problem, in November 1996, the EU Council of Ministers adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons residing in Europe against the consequences of those Acts. Furthermore, at the summit between the European Union and the United States held in London in May 1998, a package was agreed that also sought to alleviate the problems brought by extraterritorial legislation. It covered waivers to Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind, and an understanding regarding the disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection. It is urgent that the United States implement that agreement.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba was set out in a common position in 1996. Reaffirming the validity of the common position, the European Union in June 2008 lifted the restrictive measures imposed on Cuba in 2003. The dialogue with the authorities in Havana was resumed without preconditions and on the basis of reciprocity and non-discrimination. Five political dialogue ministerial sessions have been held with the Cuban Government addressing issues of common interest, including human rights — a question at the core of relations with all third countries, including Cuba.

We reaffirm our determination to pursue a comprehensive, results-oriented dialogue with the Cuban authorities and with representatives of civil society and the peaceful pro-democracy opposition, in accordance with EU policies. We reiterate the right of the Cuban citizens to make independent decisions about their future. We reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to fully grant its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including the freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and free access to information. We call on it to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and, following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, to extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba. In that context, we welcome the adoption of a new migration law by the Cuban Government as an important step towards the freedom of movement of Cuban citizens.

The existing restrictions on rights and freedoms undermine and offset the Cuban achievements in health care and education. Similarly, domestic Cuban economic policy seriously hampers its own economic development. In that context, we note the adoption by the Cuban Parliament in August 2011 of a package of economic and social reforms, and we expect that those reforms will be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key concerns of the Cuban population.

The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States contributes to the economic problems in Cuba, negatively affecting the living standards of the Cuban people. The lifting of the United States embargo would facilitate an opening of the Cuban economy, to the benefit of the Cuban people.

Together, we again express our rejection of all unilateral measures directed against Cuba that are contrary to commonly accepted rules of international trade. We urge the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all the areas mentioned.

In spite of continued concerns and criticisms on the aforementioned human rights situation in Cuba, the member States of the European Union unanimously voted in favour of resolution 68/8.

Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voted in favour of resolution 68/8.

We align ourselves fully with the statements made earlier today by representatives who spoke on behalf of the Caribbean Community, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The embargo has been and continues to be a violation of international law. It is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We take the floor at this time to re-emphasize our deeply held conviction that the ongoing embargo has served only to cause undue suffering to the Cuban people.

In his inaugural address to the United Nations in 2009, President Obama told us:

> "No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation. No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed ... The traditional divisions between nations of the South and the North make no sense in an interconnected world, nor do alignments of nations rooted in the cleavages of a long-gone cold war. The time has come to realize that the old habits, the old arguments, are irrelevant to the challenges faced by our peoples... The world must stand together to demonstrate that international law is not an empty promise." (*A/64/PV.3, pp. 10-11*)

We must continue to ask ourselves what place this embargo has in our modern world. And in an interconnected world of open borders and the free movement of people, goods and capital, how can the champions and architects of globalization simultaneously legislate the isolation of one State or place extraterritorial restrictions on commerce, global trade and the movement of individuals? How can the electorate of one country or one constituency or one district determine the cargo and path of a ship sailing into and out of Cuban waters, or the manner in which banks and corporations of other countries conduct their business with Cuba?

Versions of resolution 68/8, adopted today, have been introduced for the past 21 sessions of the General Assembly and have enjoyed near-unanimous support for years. There is no other example of the international community speaking so overwhelmingly and so consistently. However, the embargo remains stubbornly in place, and its negative impacts have intensified since the recent global financial crisis.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is aware that our small population and economy and the waning military significance of the Caribbean region have allowed our needs and concerns to be overlooked by many. As far wealthier nations and institutions have looked askance at our developmental struggles and offer only dubious prescriptions, platitudes and trite clichés, the Cuban people have rolled up their sleeves and given freely of themselves in a manner that has touched the hearts and souls of the Vincentian people. No dollar amount can adequately reflect the value of that support, solidarity and partnership, for which the Cuban people have asked nothing in return. Our appreciation cannot be overstated.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continues to hope for an evolution in the thinking and actions of our friends in the United States of America on the matter before us today, and we remain unequivocal in our call for the removal of that constraint on the development of our Caribbean neighbour.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is my pleasure to speak before the General Assembly on the important agenda item before us, namely, the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statements made earlier by representatives who spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and other regional groups.

Twenty years have passed since the United Nations started its debates on ending the unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The United States blockade against Cuba is the legacy of the Cold War. It is intended to overthrow the legitimate social system chosen by the Cuban people, and it has turned that country into a quiet backyard of the United States.

Due to the United States embargo, the new development efforts by the Cuban Government to improve the livelihood and social welfare of the Cuban people have encountered great obstacles. To make things worse, the United States Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act, expanding sanctions to other countries that wanted to develop economic and trade relations with Cuba. That is an inhumane and undemocratic action, a mockery of the common efforts of the regional countries for peaceful development. The United States embargo against Cuba clearly constitutes a grave violation against basic rights and human rights of the Cuban people.

The anti-Cuban blockade is also a wanton violation of principles stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations on the right to self-determination, sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs

and freedom of trade. It is a typical example of a extraterritorial act to force another country to change its political, economic and social system according to a particular country's values. That cannot be justified under any circumstances. Ending the unilateral economic, commercial and financial blockade by the United States against Cuba is today the unanimous demand of the Member States of the United Nations, including Cuba, that aspire to sustainable development in a peaceful environment.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly condemns the United States for the embargo against the Cuban people and demands the immediate lifting of this sanction, in accordance with the many relevant United Nations resolutions. Based on its consistent stand to oppose all sorts of interference and sanctions against a sovereign State, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as in the past, voted in support of the resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (resolution 68/8).

Once again, we strongly urge the United States to immediately abandon its blockade against Cuba.

Finally, we reiterate our support for and solidarity with the Cuban Government and people in their struggle to safeguard their national dignity and sovereignty against the United States' attempt at a unilateral blockade.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): The unilateral sanctions imposed against Cuba and its people have endured for over 50 years and have not engendered the intended consequences. That is why we have often appealed to our friend, the United States, that it is about time they were brought to an end. Today, once again, in adopting resolution 68/8 we in this Assembly joined to reiterate our collective call for the unconditional cessation of the embargo against Cuba.

For 50 years the sanctions have had no evident effect except as a curtailment of the basic right of ordinary Cubans to development and happiness. We believe that ending the sanctions would have obvious economic benefits for both Cuba and the United States. As a friend and ally of the United States and Cuba, we see a glittering light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope on the horizon, hope for a lasting solution to an unfortunate situation.

We hope and believe that both the United States and the Cuban Governments can work towards a lasting solution, one that would restore the relations that existed between the two peoples and countries long before the embargo was imposed. We are encouraged by the steps taken by the United States since 2009. We see the lifting of the restrictions on family travel and remittances to Cuba, the expansion of humanitarian exports and the review of regulations for United States telecommunications companies, among others, as promising steps. Much more needs to be done.

On 4 April 2002, then United States President George W. Bush observed, in his remarks on the Trade Promotion Authority Legislation and Extension of the Andean Trade Preference Act:

> "[T]rade creates the habits of freedom [which create] the expectations of democracy and demands for better democratic institutions. Societies that are open to commerce across their borders are more open to democracy within their borders.
>
> "And for those of us who care about values, believe in values, not just American values, but universal values that promote human dignity, trade is a good way to do that."

We agree with former President Bush. Commercial engagement is the best way to encourage more open societies. Indeed, ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba would be a great victory for the values that we have collectively undertaken to uphold, values enshrined in the Charter of this Organization.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina's vote in favour of resolution 68/8 reaffirms the rejection by the Government and people of the Argentine nation of that type of unilateral, illegal and illegitimate measure. The economic sanctions imposed by the United States since 1962, called an embargo, can be interpreted by some only as a trade and financial war, which could be highly criticized, but let there be no mistake. Its substance, its main goal is political, against the Government of the Republic of Cuba and against what the Cuban people have freely chosen as a way of life.

Those measures are not merely arbitrary and illegal. They also run counter to what the international community and the United Nations have been demanding for more than 20 years. Over the years, Governments of the United States have put forward various arguments publicly to justify the blockade. However, we know that the public arguments have changed. But if we look at

the documents of the various Administrations, we see the real reason behind the maintenance of the blockade. It is what has been said since the very beginning, that its goal is to increase discomfort among the Cuban people through hunger and thus to bring about despair and the fall of the Government.

That endeavour has already failed. It has failed, not just because of the courage of the Cuban people, but because the international community has just expressed itself, with an overwhelming majority, in favour of putting an end to the unfair, arbitrary and illegal measure.

Argentina is firmly committed to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for the settlement of disputes between States. We believe that the embargo against Cuba, far from resolving disputes, creates new ones. It violates the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba just said, it blocks a free people from access to minimum goods for health, technology and education. In fact, here, in the United Nations, where we support and want a more just international order, in reality, the disproportionate exercise of the economic clout of one nation against a weaker one not only is unequal but accentuates the inequality and distances us from true multilateralism.

Argentina defends free trade, but not through the survival of the fittest or the law of the jungle. Free trade is also trade that is free of arbitrary impositions that impair the equality of opportunities. Thus, Law 24871 establishes the normative framework with respect to the reach of foreign laws on Argentine territory. It provides that foreign laws will be absolutely inapplicable and without any legal effect if they are intended to cause extraterritorial legal effects through imposing an economic blockade or by limiting investment in a given country in order to bring about a change of Government in that country or to have an effect on the right to self-determination.

It is unacceptable that, despite the repeated and practically unanimous appeal of the international community, especially by the General Assembly, for elimination of the embargo against Cuba, that embargo persists. Cuba is suffering unilateral aggression disguised as mere commercial aggression. I insist that that is unjustified. We must stress the fact that multilateralism defends true democracy throughout the world. True democracy means acknowledging that freedom is the condition of liberation. Some countries simply understand that freedom is freedom of the market and subjugate other countries to military or economic hegemony.

Lastly, Argentina reiterates its position against such measures. We stand together with Cuba as an active member of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. With passion, agreement and conviction, we shall continue to fully implement the provisions of resolution 68/8.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.